

REWRITE



The Magazine of Effective Writing

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IS IT BUSINESS OR CRAFT FOR YOU?

One of the things that is the matter with the writing and selling business is that editors and writers operate too far apart. It is a lonely business at best at either end. Stop and think for a moment that it is possible for a successful writer to expend his whole lifetime writing and selling, yet never meet an editor face to face. A rare experience, you would say, but I can give you the names of hundreds of writers who I know do all of their contact work with editors completely by correspondence. For ten years at the start of my own reportorial work, I reviewed plays and did features for H. T. Parker, one of the great critics of all time. In those ten years I met and talked with "HTP" probably not over 25 times, and most of the occasions I remember were chance meetings—at plays or concerts he was covering, and I was attending for pleasure. Most of my jobs were handed to me by mail. And even though I free lanced, and for a year edited a twice-a-week column in the same building, I didn't talk with him in his tiny cubbyhole more than once or twice a year. For I worked days (and nights) while his "days", even longer, began after noon and ended at 4 or 5 AM in a hotel apartment from which scurried terrified messenger boys with sheaves of yellow copy-paper. (Not for nothing was "HTP" known as "Hell-to-Pay" and "Hard-to-Please" by the scads of present day big name theater-folk he trained, and who would have gladly paid for their hard-won privilege of working under him.)

REWRITE has long advocated that all editors in the NYC area, and other concentrated publishing centers, should get out of their literary vacuum and meet both writers & the small town folk, who still form the bulk of their readers. And we believe it would be a good thing, too, for writers not only to do the same thing, but also to meet more editors. We got to thinking about this the other day, when almost within 24 hours a woman who is learning to write, told us she enjoyed REWRITE because she had never met a writer or editor; and Bill McGreal told us that his wife, Elizabeth Yates, was off on a lecture tour because she likes to meet people, get to know her readers. And write better.

We have also favored the idea of the "WCS Family" of writers because it tends to create an interest among writers to work together. Actually, there is not nearly enough of this kind of thing. Some writers would like to see an authors' union that would possess the power to bludgeon editors and force the introduction of better conditions for writers. I think one only has to glance at work conditions in industry to realize that that would be a calamity. Indeed, the best minds among capitalists and management appreciate today that it was the worst thing that could happen when Management and Labor got on opposite sides of an iron curtain. It allowed

Labor's bosses to drive a wedge between them for the benefit almost exclusively of those self-perpetuating bosses. It may be a long, long time coming, but I believe eventually, that ordinary good sense will dictate a necessary, and not minority, representation of Labor upon—every industrial board of directors. Only then will we avoid prolonged and costly strikes, and achieve industrial harmony. Or discover the real "joys" of "work".

A great stride in this direction for writers would be the formation of a much larger and active organization, such as the Authors League of America and the National Writers' Club. Both of these groups are doing things that the other ought to be doing. But both represent a form of segregation in a sense, because the first is a kind of exclusive or at least restricted "club" for professional authors, while NWC is primarily beneficial to the small writers whom the ALA largely overlooks. This is not to say that we are looking down our noses at either the NWC or ALA. They both serve writers well. But they need to get together, work together and organize strong sectional groups or units. They need to draw in the loyalties and the strength of the thousands of part-time and full-time authors who belong to neither organization. Especially the annual crop of new writers who need training in technique and direction along the lines of their profession's ideals and responsibilities.

REWRITE believes in writers' conferences. They serve a useful, although hit-or-miss & aimlessly disorganized, purpose in teaching writers some of the necessary minima referred to in the preceding paragraph. Too often their charted course varies from year to year according to the quality of the leadership, and the personalities of those hired to be on the staff. It is easy for the staffs quickly to deteriorate until the meetings become merely lectures instead of animated, stimulating roundtables, and the conferences as a whole merely social gatherings for the promotion of the literary "I" and the entertainment of summer boarders and autograph seekers. Those who would benefit the most & could give the most, stay away.

We would like to see a revitalization and improvement of the whole conference idea. We would like to see gatherings where groups of writers and editors on the professional level would seriously tackle the industry's serious problems, and where apprentice writers could have a real chance to see the "great" writers and editors in action. We'd like to see the separation between the creative and business ends of writing, editing and publishing broken down. We'd like to see groups of writers visit the great magazine and bookpublishing plants, perhaps allowed to serve as apprentices, always with the idea of making them better writers. We'd like to see writers and editors really work together. Period.

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WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

Elva, Bill and Billy send their Christmas greetings, and best wishes for a prosperous New Year to all readers of this magazine, & to our many friends scattered throughout the world. May 1952 be a happier, more peaceful year, and may we all achieve more of the good will and human kindness envisioned by the Man of Galilee.

SO MANY THINGS WE CAN DO

Let us recall, and treasure within our inner hearts at this season of the year, that the Christian faith is a joyous, adventurous faith. It is a positive, affirmative faith, that God expects us to live, not merely to exist. To make good and wise use of His world for the well being of all His children. As we do this, we achieve greater physical and spiritual health, security, and true enjoyment of the beautiful world we live in.

Particularly for writers it is essential, and inescapably necessary to get into close and harmonious tune with the source of "inspiration" and energy. All artists appreciate at one time or another that they merely represent media through which God acts & activates His being. We may not understand all the chastisements that the Good Lord and nature seem to visit upon us in our daily lives. But it is true that for writers "no experience is ever lost". The more we can develop a faith that enables us to work with God, &

to make use of all the experience with which He fills our lives, the happier and more productive we will be. "Not my way, but Thine."

There is so much we can do. And so much of it is harnessed to the simple task of doing at once whatever God prompts us to think of doing. Many persons express a well nigh universal difficulty in learning to pray. It is scarcely more than the act of asking God to fill us with His presence, and then being receptive to the messages He imparts to us. He does not ring a telephone bell or turn a TV switch. He does not speak in a loud voice or light up a moving screen. But to those, who in true humbleness and humility seek communion with Him, He does speak.

This is the great miracle of life, an act and an adventure shared by all creators. One may be rich or poor, a writer, artist or an ordinary man, woman or child endowed with a capacity for translating human kindness, understanding or compassion into terms of paper or other people's lives. For creators are persons like you and me, who see a need and act to report it, or do something about it. The man who merely helps to put Bibles in every hotel room, or spends a few hours a week helping veterans in hospitals to "kill" time, is as much a "creator" as the best writer of slick stories or of literature that "wins" a Nobel Prize.

Creators are doers. That fact cannot be reiterated too often. They dream, but they do things, get good jobs done, while the rest of us gawp and say, "Why didn't I think of that and get it done?" Creators are not—"perfectionists", but neither are they "slap-happy" slops. They get necessary jobs done as well as they can with the necessary tools & technical skills at hand at the moment. Often they realize only too fully their own imperfections. But they work as well as they can with what God gave them. Frequently, the job they accomplish inspires others to do a better job. Thus, the torch is handed on, from the loosening fingers of one creator to the strengthening palm of another. Thus, we are all members of the same team, working toward the same goal.

Let us not forget in this moment of thinking through this idea, that ideas beget additional ideas. As we get one story, or article or poem or one good deed done, others will flow in to fill the void. Two writers told us the same thing within a single week recently. They said they had not made a sale hardly for weeks, but they were still writing. And they added significantly, that they wished they had more time and strength. For neither of them could keep up with their ideas. Both have to organize and line up the pieces they want to write, string them out, months ahead.

Of course everyone has resting periods or fallow times when the fields do not seem to bear fruit. But spring comes again, always.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE POETS WORKSHOP

The Workshop is in session once again for the purpose of constructively criticizing a poem by Jean Hoyt Smith.

A PRAYER

Life leaves its imprint on each aging face
As on a printed page for Youth to read,
Look now, Oh Youth that yours grows full
of grace
And is not filled with pettiness and greed.
Our thoughts and actions are the type Life
uses,
And we must see that it is clean and clear.
What's written on the face precludes excuses
We must meet life with calm & without fear.
It is the pettiness and greed in life
Which makes the blurs & blots on what
should be
A lovely face, and fills its lines with strife.
So write your record clear for all to see.
Let all youth read how wonderful old age
May be. Oh, Life print me a calm, clear
open page.

It renews one's faith in human nature, indeed, to see the helpful comments which come into the Workshop. It is heartwarming truly when poets will take time to sit down & help a fellow writer. And do it in the constructive, understanding way Workshop poets do it. They all seem to know that taking criticism is like taking medicine. It's the thing that a sick poem needs, but not the pleasantest, easiest thing to take. So they administer it with sympathy.

Josephine Murray Emma, who writes good poetry herself, offers the first help. "Let me say that I consider this poem well worthwhile. I like the thought; in fact, I have often toyed with the same idea myself. I don't like the title, however, as I don't think it is exactly a prayer (though that may have been in the writer's heart). For I feel she is sounding a warning to us all rather than a petition to God.

"I don't like line 3, 'Look now', & would prefer that line to read, 'Oh, Youth be sure that your face grows in grace', or something better. In line 7, I object to 'What's'. It is not dignified enough for a sonnet. That line could read, 'Lines written on a face preclude excuses'. In line 10, I'd say there are too many S's, giving a hissing sound that is not pleasant. Why not say, 'That make the blamishes on what should be'? Also, in line 11, I'd say, 'Let all youth read the glory of old age—When life has printed a clear, open page.'

"I hope this may help Jean Hoyt Smith, because I like her thought-provoking sonnet & feel that she should not discard it."

Mary Grant Charles is our most faithful & industrious commentator. She does her homework every time. She says: "This sonnet is a musical and technically well written one. I find an extra beat in the last line, though, which can be avoided by dropping one or two adjectives. There is some word repetition in this poem. If 'plain' is substituted for the second 'clear' in line 12, it will also give the line an added vowel sound. The 'printed page' has been used a good deal and in this poem seems to require the rather generalized words employed in carrying out the figure and also to find correct end-rhymes. Perhaps more specific words would give sharper images."

A new voice is heard this month. We welcome the comment of Eva T. Hendrickson. "I like very much the significance of the poem. It seems to me, however, that a few changes in the wording would give it more rhythm & accomplish Mrs. Smith's purpose more effectively. Her line, 'What's written on the face precludes excuses', is very interesting. The one, 'Our thoughts and action are the type-life uses', would be more grammatical if she had said, 'Each thought and act', since the word 'type' is used in the singular sense."

Bessie H. Hartling offers some advice. "It is beautiful. I think 'Meditation' might be a better title, as up to the last line it's just that. That last line seems overcrowded, and the thought changes abruptly from a meditative one to a direct prayer petition. The effect is somewhat startling. The impression was that a mature person was speaking. Is this then the prayer of youth? Young people are seldom so philosophical!"

"We must meet life with calm and without fear" is good philosophy, but difficult to practise. It is not always 'pettiness & greed' which cause worry and unrest, but in a broad sense the philosophy is sound, and I love the poem."

Clarence C. Adams agrees with the others, that the last two lines ought to sum up and give meaning to the balance of the poem. He says also: "The title is too indefinite and really does not belong to the poem. 'An Admonition' would be more appropriate. However, that is also too indefinite. There's something in the poem that should suggest a more impressive title."

"The use of 'oh' in lines 3 & 14 is poor. They lack power to convey anything. The 's' sound is over-used throughout the poem. The contraction in line 7 is not good. The poem has an overabundance of adjectives. Line 14 has the heaviest padding. There are several instances of triteness ('full of grace', 'pettiness & greed', 'clean & clear', to mention a few). Lines 5 & 6 are vague."

"If 'thoughts and actions' should be 'clean and clear', then 'it' is out of place. The thought of the poem is good, but needs some

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revising to put it into a strong enough vehicle to carry it into the mind of the reader."

Mr. Adams closes his comments by declaring that were he in Mrs. Smith's position, he'd be willing to and expect to receive just as "brutally frank an analysis" as he has handed her. Mr. Adams has been for several years one of the hardworking clerks of prize contests sponsored by the American Poetry League.

The technical details have been noted. I am sure if we were all in the same room and could talk back to each other, out of the resulting discussion would come this conclusion: that while Mrs. Smith has a fine basic idea for this poem, and one that should not be discarded, she has not succeeded in—expressing it clearly and beautifully. And the chief reason is that she has not thought it through clearly enough. Nor has she in every case used the precise, the inevitable word, to express it. Note the criticisms of the line, "Our thoughts and actions are the type Life uses". The meaning Mrs. Smith wants us to accept for "type" does not stand out clearly, or unmistakably. It is too easy to think instinctively first of the other "type", meaning "class". Mrs. Smith could get around this difficulty by rephrasing the line in such a way as to use the word "set" in it. For if we got an image of Life setting type, we could not possibly attach the wrong meaning to the word.

Mrs. Smith failed to think through fully in the line where she contrasted pettiness and greed with calm and courage. These are not exact contrasts, are they? It is pettiness and greed that write themselves on a face, it is true, but if we wish to avoid having them written there, should we not look to their opposites for help? Mrs. Smith is trying to put a lot of meaning into these 14 lines. She is trying to suggest the many things that can, and are, written on a face. But I think her poem would be better if she let a few things, perhaps, stand for many. Let pettiness, and greed, stand for the things we don't wish to have written on our faces. And for the sake of consistency and clarity, contrast these, cleanly, with their precise opposites.

The last line is an instance of failure to use the precise word. The author did not really mean, "Oh, Life print me a calm, clear open page". What she meant was that she desired Life to print things on her face that she would not be ashamed of. This thought, I was interested to observe, provoked Mary Taylor to comment: "The idea that Life ought to print a calm, clear open page sounds unreal. Life leaves its mark on all of us, & to print a 'calm, clear open page' would be to shun, as it were, all of life's experiences".

Writing a poem is as intricate and complicated a task as working out a mathematical, or geometrical problem. And one must be just as accurate and logical in performing it. I think that's the lesson of this Workshop.

February Workshop. Here is the poem we're to discuss in the February Workshop.

THE AGE OF NOISE

Day and night shrill telephones ring,
Radios blare and shout and sing,
Airplanes drone across the sky,
Trucks and cars roar madly by;
Day and night on the waiting hours
Great clocks boom from city towers,
Factory whistles wail and tear
Ruthlessly through the helpless air,
Insurgent armies meet and clash,
Bullets zing and atoms crash....

Sometimes I long with nostalgic pain
For the good old days to come back again,
The blessed, peaceful days when noise
Was mostly made by healthy boys.

Gertrude L. Durand.

Deadline for comments on the above poem is January 5th, 1952.

Send them in earlier, if possible. But send them in! Remember, you help yourself in addition to helping the published poet.

Submit your poems for possible discussion in the Workshop. Fair play: each poem to be eligible, must be accompanied by a criticism of the current poem up for discussion. I used the word "criticism" advisedly, for while we welcome all comments, it is the practical and specific, and constructive criticism of both the weakness and strength of a poem we like to pass on to the author. That is what helps him or her to improve this poem, and also the overall ability to write every poem.

If you wish to have your poem returned, often with a brief word of criticism, enclose a return, self-addressed, stamped envelope. All comments are forwarded to the respective authors whether or not we can fit them into REWRITE. Comment on a separate sheet, please, so we can do this. And please comment whether you send in an entry or not.

THE QUESTION BOX

The question has been raised whether a poem (and by implication, any other type of a ms.) can be resold or placed, when published by a newspaper or magazine that does not pay.

The answer of course is a categorical and loud "No!" Most editors are interested only in the first run. Their readers want "fresh fruit". The N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE pays well for the right to reprint. Some small religious, i.e., Sunday School publications, take what they can get from one of the larger houses, on an informal syndicate basis. But generally speaking, publication even in the most obscure periodicals, destroys any cash value a ms. might have had. Writers are wise to think well before they "give away" any ms.

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REPORT ON THE PROSE WORKSHOP

The response in November was very gratifying. All the more because there was quite a bit of confusion caused by the delayed publication of the November issue (actually only a day or two) and the fact that there was no ms. to criticize in the October issue. I foresaw this to a certain extent, and therefore, arranged that a criticism of the story, published in the November issue must accompany each entry in the "Why I Want to Write" Workshop (Closes: December 10th).

Actually, many writers were so interested that they wrote in to tell us they couldn't send a criticism with their "Dramatic Scene" because the November issue had not arrived. In many cases they immediately sent in their analysis of the Short Short Story as soon as it did arrive. We of course told the others that their credit was good and to send in a criticism as soon as they could. Because of this delay, I am holding my analysis of THE CLUB MERTING by Emily R. Page until January. In the meantime please study the excellent, detailed analysis on P. 16 by Murray Hoyt.

No. 8. A Fiction Transition. (1) from one scene to another or (2) back into a "flash-back"; or (3) forward to the main part of a story from a flashback. Length: 150 words. A fuller discussion of the idea expected will be found in the November issue. \$1 prize for those used. Closes: Feb. 10th, 1952.

Criticisms: we will accept an analysis of (1) the Dramatic Scene (this issue), Short Short Story (November), or "Why I Want to Write" (January, 1952). I hope that as many writers as possible will comment on each of these practice exercises. It will help each one of these authors, and also all who participate.

Report on No. 6 (Dramatic Scene). A considerable variance of entries greeted us in this Workshop. They included a stage scene, and a rather melodramatic reflective scene, in which a single character reacted & then, in agonized frenzy smashed a vase. Although fairly trite, this latter scene had effective timing, a good rise and fall in the tempo. Another held interest until the next to the last paragraph, which confused the reader. It was straight dramatic narrative. The author tried a bit too hard to gain a smash sensation. She got between me and the story, and so broke the spell.

Sue Magee entered a nice, observant scene of a first day at school. Well rounded, emotionally moving. But it was a picture, nothing more; no story. And referring to Ann as "the woman" several times, killed illusion. Mrs. Julia F. Polinski had a fairly effective scene of two little Indian boys observing another's discomfiture. Overseeing, and overhearing scenes are usually weak. It is too easy a way to write a scene. And in this case, the viewpoint shifted, to take reader

inside the observed character. See how this disassociates the reader from the story. But the basic idea was good. I wanted to see, to hear more. Sounded like a swell juvenile.

Several of the scenes did not have a continuity that suggested what came before and carried the reader forward to the next scene. One or two failed to identify the characters. Even though they have been previously identified, it should be clear what are the relationships. And of course the reader ought to be able to identify himself, feel that he is one of the characters.

The winning scene (by Priscilla Brockman, Canadian writer.) Here it is:

So that was what her mother had been like. Marta stared at the carpet with wide, unseeing eyes. She had always thought of her as—sweet and gentle, and unswervingly just. But was Gregory telling her the truth about her mother? How was she to know for sure whether he was or not? She regarded him with flashing blue eyes. "Why are you telling me this now?" she demanded. "I had a right to know long ago."

"Perhaps," Gregory assented slowly. "Possibly I did take the wrong attitude. It always seemed to me kinder to wait until—you were mature before I told you. To wait until you could look upon the situation as one that might conceivably happen to any person."

But why should it have happened to—her? Marta asked herself rebelliously. Why her? That was the unfair part. Why should she have to give up money which was rightfully hers, or else give up Peter? If she tried to explain to Peter, Peter would say:

"If you want to sit around, and wait for your inheritance, all right. I want a girl, who puts me first."

And then she wouldn't have Peter. The very thought made her desolate.

"You can understand now," Gregory was saying, "why father acted as he did. He wanted to be sure you wouldn't grow up like your—mother."

"Like your mother." Marta drew a long, quivering breath. She lifted her head defiantly. "Peter wouldn't let me be like her," she declared. She looked squarely at Gregory, her eyes unyielding, as they met his. The gray-green depths of Gregory's eyes reflected a warm kindness she had never dreamed he would be capable of feeling. A new sense of security wrapped itself about her."

(Note: get out your blue pencils. There's a lot you can say about this ms. That's why we selected it. Consider it both as a story and a technical piece of writing... I'm holding the reader comments on Mrs. Page's Short Short Story until the next issue. See P.12.)

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TIMELY NEWS AND COMMENT

The SHORELINER, Herbert F. Georges, Box 900, Portsmouth, N. H. Mrs. Georges reports that "Sometimes we use a small poem or picture that is typical of New England instead of being pertinent to our area. (See: story on P. 8.) Because we are a local magazine & supported by the area's merchants, we obviously cannot pay a national rate. Our rates compare favorably with those of the newspapers. In fact, our rates are a little higher than those of most newspapers within our area.

Each month we conduct a Photo Contest, in which the winner receives \$5 for his entry. Our usual payment for pix is between \$2 and \$3.50." This magazine, like N. H. PROFILES, uses articles, features and pictures. They must be concerned with the Great Bay & shore area. Get out your geographies or road maps and you will see the natural circulation area. PROFILES covers the whole state. Incidentally, PROFILES has a special charter subscription rate of \$3, good only until December 31, 1951, after which the rate will increase to \$3.50.

4th Annual Christian Writers' Workshop and Conference was announced in "Market Tips"... That is the readable 2-page bulletin of the CHRISTIAN WRITERS' INSTITUTE, 434 South Washington Ave., Chicago 5, Ill. Dates: January 24, 25 and 26th, 1952. (Market Tips can be subscribed to independently of the course that CWI offers. It's a monthly. Besides a leading article each month, it carries a lengthy report on one or two religious markets.

"The Boston Plan". Showing just how scarce and expensive newsprint is these days, four Boston newspapers have agreed voluntarily to reduce the spread between total daily "run" and the number of papers actually sold. It is expected between 7,000 & 18,000 tons will be saved a year. Extension of the idea to 11 other big cities could save a total of 164,000 tons annually. The day when every newsstand is surfeited with extra papers has about gone forever. Here in Lumberville a local paper refuses to take back any unsold copies and, as a result, you have to order your paper in advance! The idea behind the "Plan" is to permit larger editions. But this won't help writers or readers so much as it will allow more advertising, and no rationing of space as was the case during World War II.

DO YOU NEED MS. ENVELOPS?

Important announcement: we are going out of the envelop business! Our professional work is keeping us so busy we feel that we can be of more practical service to writers by concentrating on REWRITE, WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE, The WRITERS' BOOK CLUB and Circulating Library, and the Central Ms. Markets File.

"Hurry, Hurry, Hurry!" We still have some LARGE (flat) envelops, and plenty of the one Told (SMALL) sizes. Same prices & postage.

DOINGS AT WCS HOUSE

As of going to press, Elva, Bill and Billy had resumed their usual round of activities. Billy back in School and Sunday School with a good report card (his first) in spite of 11 days' absence. Elva and Bill catching up on mass. Bill still growling bearishly about the unending "major rain showers" ("Showers, heck, it dumps 2 & 3 inches every time the clouds appear!") But despite a few aches and pains Bill was prepared to canvass before Thanksgiving for the two Churches & Joint Projects Committee at the Center, and for All Saints Chapel in nearby Whalom after Thanksgiving. And he had been finally sworn in for a very minor office in the Grange.

And on Armistice Day, a beautiful "Indian Summer" day, we got Billy his first view of Mt. Monadnock and the whole "Fack Monadnock" range, a glorious view of which we drank our full while visiting Bill McGreal. It was of course disappointing not to see our friend, Elizabeth Yates, away on a lecture trip. But it was very nice to meet Nora S. Unwin, whose studio adjoins the McGreals' farmhouse. And Billy, who greatly enjoyed "Doughnuts for Lin", was impressed to see coal-black Lin walking about the house.

Elva was invited to be a judge in 2 prize contests for poets: one to be conducted early in the new year by the Worcester Women's Club; the other next summer by the American Poetry League. Regrettably she was forced to beg off on both. We are both trying to clear the decks so that we can concentrate more on our service to WCS clients and REWRITE readers.

ONE GOOD BOOK AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT

THE WRITING OF BIOGRAPHY. Catherine Drinker Bowen. The Writer. \$1.50. An all too-brief, but exciting lecture the author gave—about her work in writing "John Adams & the American Revolution". Many of her phrases, wrung out of hard experience, are memorable, comforting to the serious teacher of writing & exceedingly helpful to all types of writers. The solid, uncompromising character of this author shines through every page. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

NOTE: never have so many books for review, I believe, come in so close to our deadline time. You will find them scattered throughout this issue. But please observe there is no usual book page. WRITERS' BOOK CLUB will continue to serve you. But we are devoting, from now on, most of the space we otherwise would use for listing books, to subjects of more importance to active writers. Cost of space is steadily increasing. We wish to use it to the best advantage for you.

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"SITUATION" VS. TRUTH TO LIFE

On the previous page we mentioned a problem that has an important effect on the illusion of reality. It concerns the place of Situation in a story. It must be as unobtrusive as the dialogue tags, the "he says" & its equivalents, which the reader only sees if they are forced and distract the reader's attention from the story to themselves. Incidentally, this is a problem that does not bother inexperienced writers alone. Skilled producers in the theater and motion picture world often bet thousands of dollars on the melodramatic situation that their own sense ought to tell them won't stand up.

To prove this and also to show our readers the difference between a story based on human character and relationships, as against raw complication, I would like to discuss a number of the motion pictures reviewed on a current review-sheet distributed by the cooperative organization, "Joint Estimates of Current Motion Pictures", 28 W. 44th St., NYC 15. (Its reviews represent the opinions of a group of representatives of 12 national religious and women's organizations.)

In each case we will give the "Plot" just as it is summarized. "The Lady Pays Off". "A beautiful young woman, voted 'Teacher of the Year,' unwittingly incurs a \$7,000 gambling debt and agrees to pay off the casino owner by tutoring his young daughter." The review said, "this comedy offers forced and unconvincing situations". Do you see how the author of the screenplay (it was an original, not taken from a previously published work) strains to get two extremes together in the same picture? Is it plausible that a teacher earning this title would be "caught" in a situation of this kind? Possible, yes, since anything is possible, but not probable. The weakness of the plot hinges on the word "unwittingly". A trick had to be employed. The characterization had to be violently manipulated.

"The Harlem Globetrotters". "When a Negro basketball star and honor chemistry student quits college to join the Globetrotters (an actual Harlem professional team), he learns the meaning of loyalty and selflessness." A picture that is amateurish in its acting because the actors are largely amateurs, but a good show, says the review. Now here's controversial material served up in a very topical, timely manner and much more difficult than the previous story to put over. Also an original. It succeeds apparently because it handles its background (the key item) "naturally" and makes it bear on the simple, illustrative action. The author has challenged the reader: "What would happen if"---? He then follows through, answering the problem with generalized "illustrative action" that is always kept within bounds of plausible reality and good entertainment.

"Detective Story". "A detective, relentless

and uncompromising in his hatred of evil, is brought low by the realization that his beloved and adored wife had sought medical aid before they were married from the very doctor whose criminal practice has brought him under the detective's surveillance." It is taken from Sidney Kingsley's play. The review says, "an absorbing drama of human beings who partake of greatness and of a human fallibility." The PTA adds: "There is a core of classic tragedy in the detective's corrosive hatred of his own father which so permeates his character and his self-righteous actions, that it ultimately transforms him into his father's image."

Here is an arbitrary situation, an intellectual equation or pattern wherein a human being is trapped by the scurvy trick that destroys plays on a sincere man. The wife's act is carefully planted where it will serve as dramatically as possible. Such a situation, obviously, could very easily be played melodramatically. It is not, because everyone in the production is interested in working for characterization. The human relations, upon which any story depends, are weighed & balanced and worked out so that they take on a relentless, inevitable quality. The author, therefore, does not have to strain and manipulate the characters into forced dramatic situations. He only has to tell it straight once he has arranged the events in their effective order. See how much weaker the story would be if the wife's dereliction followed instead of preceded her marriage. Everywhere character and circumstance carefully dovetailed so as to be natural & yet dramatic.

Now I'd like to take one or two stories a student friend of ours submitted to us a few days ago. I will mention these only in general terms because I do not wish to destroy any potential value that may lie in them. A woman is so engrossed in her card club that when it becomes a matter of life and death, with regard to someone who is dear to her—she thinks first of the fact that she can't attend her beloved club. Now I knew a woman just like that. She often placed material, personal pleasures before natural human responses to life. Her sense of proportion in such things was faulty. But this story failed to convince me. It was caricature to me, as the author contrived the situation. For one in the face of actual death would be so unemotional. The author distorted, played down one natural emotional relationship & over-emphasized another less natural. Thus, she did not distort situation so much as she manipulated the characterization so that it would result in a cruel commentary by the author upon the woman. That story was controlled by the author from outside of the character. It would have to seem documented—from within to be convincing.

In another story this writer resorted unfairly to a trick in order to maintain suspense. Please turn to Page 8

REWRITE

Cont'd from Page 7

pense. A character was required to make a decision. It was the MC and she did it by way of a telephone call. The author did not allow the reader to see what was scribbled on the memo-pad or hear what the MC said to the Western Union operator. The result is "suspense" of an inferior kind. Inferior because the reader is excluded from the story, cannot participate or identify himself with the MC. Of course there is a twist at the end—a surprise twist. But it loses impact since important facts have been unfairly withheld from the reader by the author and the MC.

Incidentally, the author ran into further difficulties because reference is made to the decision twice and the story becomes ambiguous simply because the reader has no ready way of cross-checking the facts. The first time, as I recall, the MC tries to reassure herself that she has made the "right" decision; but we don't know which way the MC decided, so as readers we are "blind" at this point. The second time the MC tells the other character who is party to a second telephone call, that she "cannot come" to her assistance. Well, the facts are that if the MC made the right decision, she could come. If she made the "wrong" decision, she couldn't. Therefore, when it later transpires that she did make the right decision, the reader recalls this telephone conversation and must, inevitably believe either that the MC could only have made the decision rightly by "absent-mindedly writing down a negative on the memo-pad and repeating it aloud to the telegraph operator, or she was lying to her confidant during the second telephone call. In the first alternative the decision, accordingly, is made by an act of aberration, not through character and integrity. It isn't a satisfying outcome for the reader then. Nor is it believable that the MC would be so unaware of what she was doing. But it is unbelievable also that she would lie to evade a responsibility. That would make her definitely an unsympathetic character.

The inevitable implication of these plots that we have analyzed for you is that drama at its best requires ironclad logic, and it flourishes best when an author doesn't manipulate his characters or his situations to get arbitrary effects imposed from the outside of the story. That brings you back irresistibly to the conclusion that the "hard way" is the best way to tell a story. When you derive your "situations" from life, and constantly check your human relationships—in order to develop the situation, one step at a time, you are most likely to avoid implausibility and its corollary, strain. Re-examine the plot of that movie made from the play by Sidney Kingsley. It is easy to read motives into any act, especially "after the fact" or where you do not have all the facts. But I think it is fair in this instance and correct to state that even the use of technique to select, eliminate and intensify an extremely dramatic situation proceeded from

a genuine interest in people rather than the desire to achieve a merely theatrically effective punch. I know in my own experience, I have sometimes stumbled on those rare moments when I have suddenly realized that my or my friends' attempts to plot have luckily reached one of those crossroads where the well nigh perfect technical situation & the natural human situation practically coincide or overlap. There is no need for fitting or chipping and bolstering up the needed dramatic squeeze with elaborate tactical conditions and premises to make it acceptable to readers. I know what a relief it has always been and how overjoyed we are that we don't have to falsify life or distort it in order to get our effect.

But in a rather long experience with fiction I have come increasingly to believe it is not necessary to trick and deceive readers; to distort life and force it into that sort of "Procrustes' bed" which makes a bad story seem nothing more than a "story". Know your people and their backgrounds much better than most writers do. When your plotting becomes stiff and refuses to jell, re-think your human and emotional relations. Don't go into your ivory tower and try to be a grand "artist". After all, your job is to tell the best story you can. Neither on the level of entertainment nor literary quality must you ever for a minute forget or lose control of story values.

Your real job is to manage a discriminating, even tempered and wise balance between the little world of illusion and life. The writers who do this are the remembered ones, and the artists whose lasting fame and compassion and understanding become a solace to all humanity, and so are passed down from one to the next, and the next through all eternity. Situation, then, is a challenge to the best that is in us, not a head-ache & nightmare to be wrestled with blindly and in cold but tortured sweat.

A NEW NEW HAMPSHIRE MAGAZINE

The N.H. TROUBADOUR, popular State magazine for approximately 20 years, suspended as of the November issue because the appropriation for its publisher, the State Development and Planning Commission, was reduced.

N.H. PROFILES, Mrs. Justine Flint Georges, 1 Pleasant St., Portsmouth, N. H., has taken over The TROUBADOUR's subscription list. This is a new monthly magazine. (One of the first free lances to sell to it is REWRITE's subscriber, Mrs. Julia F. Polinski.) It is published by Mr. & Mrs. Georges, who during several years have previously published The SHORELINER, a picture magazine of the shore line from Kennebunk, Maine, to Newburyport, Mass. (A report on this magazine on Page 15.)

N.H. PROFILES is a magazine that is edited apparently on a newsworthy basis. It will be highly departmentalized for wide interest.

REWRITE

GOOD WRITING INVOLVES SELLING

If you are writing for publication or trying to, you have a selling problem. Whether you are merely writing letters to the editor of your local weekly paper, or have an assignment from the SAT. EVE. POST, selling is part of your business. You cannot dodge the issue. To prove my point, several years ago one of the most successful feature writers, who sold regularly to the POST, drew an assignment from the READERS' DIGEST to do the biography of the late Wendell Willkie. The RD was reported to have paid him a fat fee, plus expenses. But he couldn't solve the peculiarly individual RD style, and so he muffed the assignment. That might seem to be—a writing problem, but it really was a selling problem.

Good writing involves selling. To place even a letter to the "vox pop" column or one of those "give-away" poems that certain newspapers paste up in a poetry corner with practically no discrimination at all, it is required of you to please some editor. In the top slick magazines, the goal of the majority of all inexperienced writers, it's necessary also to please the readers. If your short story or novelette provokes a favorable response, your selling problem the next time you submit a ms. is rendered that much easier. You still have to hit the editor between the eyes with a story that's both right and compelling. But your selling problem is less acute.

Practically all writers, including the top commercial ones, dream of a perfect agent, a business agent who will relieve them of the tedium of studying markets. Then they can—just write and have no more selling problems to harry them at their desks, or out of the proverbial night's sleep while they're working on their next masterpiece. But writing, unfortunately, is not governed that way.

Writing, as I have come to realize, after nearly thirty years of active writing on my own and counselling hundreds, if not thousands of other writers, consists of the never-ending job of continually selling an individual package. Each piece you complete & bring to market, is a totally new project—that must be judged, and will stand or fall so far as an editor or the ultimate consumer, the reader, is concerned, on its own merits. Your previous success as a writer, any "handles" to your name which you may possibly have gathered, will help win you a reading. But they won't by themselves alone effect a sale. Or if they do, you can be pretty sure the market is not one you as a successful artistic or commercial writer, will be long proud to hold within your grasp.

Writing is one job, selling another. But the two can rarely be separated. Even when you think to divorce yourself from the commercial market by writing for the literary, the quality magazines and reviews. Even in

such so-called "high brow" markets, the law of supply and demand, the rule of selection still holds. You as a prospective contributor, must continue to please an editor. And to succeed in that project, you will inevitably have to "study the book". In other words you have a selling problem on your hands. To the degree that you "case" the magazine, and the editor and the type of readers, who buy the publication, you will be successful and avoid a rejection slip.

After a lifetime of writing it seems to me that you do not have to be a "commercial" or merely money writer, to see that there is an art and a science to selling, just as there is to writing. Many would-be authors expend a small fortune in "learning to write", yet they almost totally neglect the business of selling. Good writing involves the practical job of knowing where you are going to place any given ms. and why.

MARKETS ARE WHERE YOU FIND THEM

AM. AGRICULTURIST, Play Dep't., Box 367, Ithaca, N. Y., has a list of plays that are royalty free, inexpensive and easy to mount on any type stage. Enclose a stamp. The editors state they have always tried to stimulate amateur groups in farm communities to put on good rural-life one act plays. This magazine recently ran an interesting resume of the program of the N.Y. State Fair Theater productions this year by three rural groups, three community theaters, three college theater groups and one industrial group, which volunteered to give two plays twice a day in the Women's Building on the Fair Grounds at no cost to visitors.

Playwrights won't make a lot of money from either of these outlets, but it shows there is an opportunity to get your work displayed in what on the surface might seem an unlikely spot.

CHRISTIAN DIGEST, Christian Digest Pub.Co., 106 Mason St., N.W., Grand Rapids 2, Mich.. One of our scouts picked this book up lately on a newsstand. The thought occurred immediately to her, that here is a chance for religious writers to get a cross-section of what a lot of magazines use. (The source of the first printing is given.) That is quick and efficient thinking. So we investigated.

Here is the resulting report from Rudy P. Dik (Rudolph P. Dik). "CHRISTIAN DIGEST is a pocket size magazine, world wide circulation (about 25,000). It selects and condenses the best in current Christian literature.

"The largest percentage of articles which are featured in C.D. are reprints. However, we have included several feature items, such as 'Servicemen's Section', 'A Women's Page', 'Missionary Report', 'Religious News', and 'Party and Program Ideas'." (In the Aug. issue the report of a reader survey was printed.) So, it is a limited market, too.

REWRITE

STYLE, A WRITER'S RESPONSIBILITY

A literary agent once remarked at Durham, that a certain ms. (and the author's work in general) had "no style. Why anyone, even my messenger, could tell by reading the opening sentence that this is hopelessly amateurish drivel." This agent is rather expansive and definitively confident, like some actors, in his judgments. He is never lukewarm or neutral. But being familiar with the writings, the technical skills and personality of the unhappy victim of this caustic criticism, I knew exactly what the literary agent meant.

And now in passing let me quickly add the comment that Elva and I give short shrift to the endless discussions of "Style" which as often as not clutter the agenda of writers' conferences. For these tend to be hopelessly windy discussions of something that cannot properly be separated from the writers' job of saying something worth listening to, and doing it as briefly and clearly as possible. It seems to me the final answer in a discussion of Style could well be that given by Fletcher Pratt, the military commentator and writer of many types of books, ranging in subject matter from history and Japanese card games to science fiction. Asked whether a new writing pattern was difficult to learn, a pattern such as suddenly coming up with two books for children, he replied, "Not really. I tried to remember just three things—short sentences, no Latin derivatives, and as few participles as possible."

That's all that style is, simply being interesting and a good "literary mechanic", as Mr. Pratt terms himself. Writing is like the job of learning to dance or act. You've got to forget that you have legs to stumble over, arms to be ungraceful with, and hanging phrases to get wrapped up in. In a ms. that Elva and I read recently there occurred this kind of a word jangle in the opening line of type: "I had never told my son Lawson Uncle Henry's secret." (This made up paraphrase is not as bad as the actual example because in the latter the daughter's name ended with a consonant that made it practically impossible for the reader not to run the name into the following word, "aunt".) The result inevitably is confusion.

In a textbook recently, I saw writers admonished not to use such connectives as the words, "However", "Nevertheless", etc. What do these words add to the force of a strong sentence? editorialized the author. In dialogue they should of course be eliminated. A good line carries enough forward movement to lead the reader over the gap and into whatever line by another character that follows. It is part of a writer's style to be able to move the listener's mind forward or halt it with the resounding shock of that "snapper" that signifies a "black-out" or a descending curtain.

In the same way, in non-fiction the "line

of interest" should not be cluttered with a series of weak qualifying phrases: "not only...but also", "on the other hand", "neverless", "and so in consequence".

However, it is true that connectives used as I have used one in this sentence, to point up the transitions, the back-and-forth conflict of "angles" in a thought or theme can be very effective. Even that very tedious & trite "not only...but also" fulfills a very useful purpose, if you use it to emphasize, to intensify a paradox. The reader is helped by these devices that enable him to visualize the turns and deviations in the lane of a writer's ideas. Anything you can do to offer him signals and traffic lights, whether they be punctuation marks, "signal" words or words with certain overtone values which set up an immediate and tangible image in a reader's mind, is part of your "Style". The more you write simply, clearly, effectively and with a technical grace and skill, to that degree you are developing "Style". "Governmentese", which takes as many words as possible to say nothing, is often necessary to cover every legal twist and potential emergency that the lawmakers cannot foresee. But in the hands of weak bureaucrats it becomes merely a means to equivocate and shift responsibility. Then it is a "style" that never should be cultivated. For it is a form of style that is nothing more than gobbledegook abhorrent to every reader because of its obscurity and "hard-to-read" quality.

Another aspect of style is the eternal and unending conflict between brevity and swift flowing rhythm. On the one hand a writer desires to make every single word carry value and connotation. On the other he needs words that fit together smoothly and carry a reader forward not only effortlessly, but pleasurable. At one time or another all of us undoubtedly have travelled on two types of railroad. One has a rocky, bumpy roadbed, while the other not only has a springy, well-laid roadbed, but also the best of equipment. The result is a ride that seems to take one on a magic carpet. The car in which you ride is a swallow that skims and darts, but never during the entire ride jolts one, throws him backward or forward—hurls him swayingly across the aisle.

In a sense every writer is an engineer responsible for the safety and comfort of his passengers. When you as a reader get onto a given train of words, whether it be a prose suburban local or a fiction super-limited, a proud "extra fare", all parlor car special, you have a right to expect that the author's interest in you will force him to exert effort to make your ride purposeful and pleasant; that he will not waste your time stopping at every way station, or taking you over the longest route.

And that is really all there is to style. Well edited magazines and books are trains, that operate on split-second schedules.

REWRITE

THIS MONTH'S NEW BOOKS

CLEAR WRITING FOR EASY READING. Norman G. Shidle. McGraw-Hill Book Co. \$3.00. A book all writers and editors should own. It illustrates general principles with practical and specific examples of how not to write & by contrast how to organize your thoughts—if you wish to avoid obscurity, and achieve clarity and vigor. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

PREPARING THE MS. Udia G. Olsen. The Writers \$2.00. A new edition of the standard text on the physical & mechanical preparation. Valuable chapters on Proofreading, Indexes and Author's Rights, Permissions. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

ROSS AND THE NEW YORKER. Dale Kramer. Doubleday & Co. \$3.75. An entertaining, yet practical inside view of the building of a great magazine. It will help all writers to add a lot to their know-how in approaching an editor. Good background reading.

STORY: The Magazine of the Short Story in Book Form. No. 1. Ed. Whit & Hallie Burnett. David McKay Co. \$3.00. The magazine that "discovered" many promising writers, has become a fall & spring book of 20 stories (in each successive "issue"). Is edited in the country, too! Some new, some established names. Emphasis on "story", literary & lasting values. Interesting experiment. We hope it succeeds, because it will create a market on a more permanent basis for worthwhile writers.

THE FEAR OF FREEDOM. Francis Biddle. Intro. Harold Ickes. Doubleday & Co. \$3.50. Another "FDR Democrat" throws the book at Truman bureaucrats, and others, seeking to disregard the Bill of Rights. Actually, Mr. Biddle is concerned with the whole hysteria that more and more has built up a "pressure for orthodoxy" where-in writers, teachers, entertainers must think like the mob or be smeared. This is an important book for all who believe in real freedom and the need for a continuing, creative flow of ideas in a great democracy.

ON THE GREEN CARPET. Robert P. Tristram Coffin. The Bobbs-Merrill Co. \$3.00. Mr. Coffin writing in his favorite style, a blend of poesy and personal romance, on his well loved theme, the unity of poetry and nature, with special emphasis on the necessity of living in the Northern latitudes (that would naturally be Maine) in order to be a full-voiced and regularly producing creator. The book is attractively illustrated by Mr. Coffin.

KING'S ARROW. Joseph Patrick. J. B. Lippincott Co. \$3.50. Romantic historical, that is rather obviously pointed toward a predictable outcome. But the historical background, authentically developed, is interesting and valuable.

For more book news see next page. Buy all your books from WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. You save money and strengthen your REWRITE Magazine.

HOW DO YOU ADDRESS AN EDITOR?

The question is often raised as to whether it is wise to enclose a letter with a ms. Many competent authors, agents, teachers say you should not. I personally would not feel right if I were to ring a friend's or stranger's doorbell and, when they appeared at the door, merely thrust a bundle of ms at them, then run away without a word. Quite the contrary, I would feel "naked". The enormity of the implied question, "What do you want?" would embarrass and appall me.

It seems to me that the greater the quality of professionalism in your writing, the more reason you ought to have for explaining very briefly and succinctly your reason for sending a ms. Obviously, too, there is much more cause for explanation in the case of a factual piece than with a story. The latter must stand or fall on its own: the degree of story, the characterization, and its comment on life. But if you have a special, compelling reason for sending the ms. to a particular editor—and if you have not, why do you you send it there?—what editor in his right mind would fail to want to know it?

In a sense Elva and I enjoy the benefit of the editorial viewpoint. If we are not right in our judgments a good part of the time, we certainly should not be wasting our own time and that of our clients. Therefore, we feel that our reactions are fairly parallel to an average editor's. We try never to read letters accompanying mss. until after we carefully read and ponder upon or discuss whatever ms. is enclosed with the letter. However, we always experience something of a let-down, if there is no letter with the ms.

You see, we wish to check our reaction against what the writer has tried to do. The author was attempting to gain some effect on the reader. As a middleman sitting in judgment and at the same time trying to counsel the writer to present his brief in such a way that it will appeal to an editor & his readers, we need to have the complete confidence of the author. If we work "by guess, and by God", we may find ourselves discussing another (new) story. Or we may misinterpret the editor's reaction. But if we get a perspective on both what the writer is attempting & the editor would demand of such a ms., we can be of real assistance to both parties. For an editor much the same cross-checking is necessary because every ms. that he uses is an investment requiring the expenditure of much valuable white paper. He can't afford to be wrong many times.

Moreover, there is the matter of the creative percentages. If you hand any editor a ms., he has practically only two alternative responses: yes or no. But if you indicate to him what's in your mind, there is always the possibility his mind may strike fire on your flint. He may offer you a creative suggestion you can pick up. Then you two will be on your way. It has happened. It's not impossible.

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Here are the acceptances reported to us in the past month:

Mrs. Howard M. Canoune
Story: MOTHER'S HOME LIFE.

Blanche Keyser
Article: FATE.

Thelma Douglas
Poem: The POET'S REED.

Julia F. Polinski
Short Short Story: The ARCHER.

Winona Nichols
Short Story: ST. JOSEPH (Nov.)

Mary Grant Charles
Poems: FLORIDA MAG. OF VERSE (2), HEARTH SONGS JOURNAL (2). The WESTMINSTER MAG.

Kathryn Wilson
Filler: KING FEATURES.

Virginia Sievert
Fillers: Ashland (Wis.) PRESS.

Gilean Douglas
Articles: NORTHERN SPORTSMAN, FAMILY HERALD & STAR WEEKLY, CHRISTIAN FAMILY, etc.
Poems: DRIFTWIND, COUNTRY POET, OREGONIAN WINGS (single poem & book by the Press).

Lucile Coleman
Poem: POETS' REED.

Carrie Esther Hammil
Poems: GRADE TEACHER (2)

Helen Langworthy
Pictures: GRAND RAPIDS PRESS. (Captions)
Feature: VINCENTIAN.

Dorothy D. Holman
Articles: The SHORELINER, RURAL N. YORK ER.

Note: send in your news, and tell us your experiences with markets. Your tip is another's sale, and vice versa. Help us to build the Central Ms. Markets File, your friend.

Future Workshops: (See also P. 5.) No. 9. Dramatic Scenario. In not over 100 words, a thrilling "teaser" of a story you intend to write. One that will make an editor want to see the finished product. Closes: Apr. 10th, 1952. \$1 will be paid for any used.

Question Box. Send in your questions. We will answer them in the March issue. Deadline: Feb. 10th, 1952. We are not scheduling any contest in March. Income tax time!

The GOLDEN SCROLL Address Book. Western Art Publishers. \$1.00. The most elaborate, generally useful book for filing information of several kinds that we have seen. Strangely, the publisher's address is not given!

CAN YOU BRAG WELL?

That's the essence of a good feature. You catch your reader's attention by bragging—like any good barker shouting his spiel before the side show. "Ladies and gentlemen! I have the biggest act on the lot. The most unique, unusual, timely conglomeration of surprises you ever saw." You know how they invite, tease, inveigle, urge and exhort you. But it is all to no avail, if they can't brag that they have the greatest, most exciting, important and "must" show on earth. If they do not give you six good reasons why you've simply got to come inside, you don't put the dough on the line.

It's the same way with a feature article. You have got to prove to the reader's satisfaction you have a "story" that will interest him, entertain him, inform him. It must be important, have news-peg value as well as color and dramatic punch. Now how can writers sell a reader in this way, if they do not know their stuff and are not willing to put some enthusiasm into their "brag"?

But as I have tried to imply, if the Barker is just a bag of wind, he will not force you to lay down your two bits. He must know why his product is good; but also he should understand and satisfy his customer. A good writer does not just sit down and start the feature article he wants to write. He does not take it for granted that his readers are going to stay with him. He sells them, makes them see why he has something that is right down their alley. He persuades them mentally and sentimentally. He dominates them both in their minds and their emotions.

I thought of these things this morning as I was trying to get a good lead for the article I wanted to write. I found it extremely difficult to express in a simple, striking manner just what the bill of goods I had to sell was all about. Suddenly it occurred to me that if I bragged about my "hero" the reader would be interested. "The only man in the whole history of America" who did a remarkable, unusual and important thing. There was my lead—as simple as that.

TWO MORE NEW BOOKS

HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR READING. Norman Lewis. Doubleday & Co. \$3.95. Although it's a fact that Mr. Lewis has already written a baker's half-dozen books on this same general subject, writers can learn much from the current "model". For he uses some effective phrases, and his "inside" hints on "how you can pick a writer's brains" by skimming and observing the pattern of his thoughts is illuminating to-authors. You can do it, too, & with profit in this book.

THE ART OF CLEAR THINKING. Rudolph Flesch.. Harper & Brothers. \$2.75. A solid, better book on the same subject. Its theme: LOGIC. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection. You need it!

REWRITE

HAVE YOU BEEN OVER THE "JUMPS"?

Many inexperienced writers take selling too lightly. They consider it largely a happening resulting from luck, not the inevitable consequence of planned writing and the careful elimination of every foreseeable rejection factor. Moreover, they assume as a matter of course that they can write, and write well enough to sell, even in the top slicks if they choose to shoot in that direction. It apparently never dawns on them that they may not possess the technical skill or long acquired cunning to submit an editorially irresistible ms. at the psychologically right moment.

Anyone who has had much to do with practical selling over a long period, quickly realizes that there is a kind of arithmetical progression in reverse bearing on a writer's forward movement in the field of selling. A wide gap exists for instance, between a rank beginner making his first try, and the good second-rater, who has built up an extensive knowledge of markets and editors' reactions. This "jump" is broad but relatively easy to hurdle. Between the second-rater and an average professional author who sells semi-occasionally to the better markets, there is a much smaller void. But this one is far more difficult to surmount. It takes real skill, a good deal of craft cunning, and an infinite amount of pains-taking patience.

Finally, there is the top-level so-called commercial writer whose by-line is seen under the featured titles of so many lead articles or pieces of fiction. It is the custom of many literary writers and their surrounding audience of critics, teachers, etc., to look down their noses at these commercial "authors". Now it may be true that their product is not enduring; that it is limited to the entertainment level; and that under a continuing pressure from demanding editors, it often deteriorates.

It must be remembered, however, that such writers, even as any literary authors, cannot surmount their own limitations. They are only as good as the minds, the character, & integrity that destiny endowed them with. A writer so technically fluent and with, at intervals, so much to say as Booth Tarkington, had to learn the hard way what trying to extend his output too far, would do to him. It frequently is a wonder to me that under the present system of mass produced, large circulation magazines, the contents are fairly stimulating intellectually and for the most part technically better organized than much of the loose and formless writing to be found in the literary periodicals. This isn't to say that I do not admire literary writing, when it has something to say about people and the human spirit. And says it with real craftsmanship, avoiding the pitfalls of esoteric, privileged obscurity capable of being understood only by a snobbish few. For good writing is always pleasureable to the many over

the centuries. Its appeal is universal.

Continuing, then, our image of the handicaps a progressing writer must be able to overcome, the gulf between these top-level authors and the editors to whom they sell, is very thin. Many of them work extremely closely with their editors. The rest by reason of long experience think along the same lines, and in the same manner as the editors. Yet I know from practical experience and specific instances that while the best of writers in this category make very few mistakes and receive a comparatively limited number of rejections, the tension under which they create is far higher than that of any other type of author.

For one thing, they cannot afford the luxury of rejections. Like big league players, if they make too many mistakes, their names soon drop out of the line-up; they are waived out of the league. And that, again, is not to say that they probably do far more rewriting than most of their less experienced competitors. They are expected to know their business. But on the other hand where writers for the secondary and even smaller markets sell a largely ready-made ms. which is altered to fit immediate needs by the editors themselves, the top-level authors write a custom-made article or story. When their ms. are accepted provisionally, that is the time when they really begin to sweat, to fit them to a task of doing exactly what an editor wants, when he wants it. When readership runs into the millions, a terrific "investment" of money, materials and brains is involved. You don't make mistakes knowingly or repeat them too many times. You write right.

So, the hurdle between the semi-occasionally selling slick writer and the "regulars" is the slenderest of all. Paper-thin, it yet is the hardest to get over. Those who glide over it with such seeming ease, have learned the technique and the inside know-how in years of apprentice writing. Only in a rare instance do they make the top without difficulty on the first leap. And then they often pay a higher price in having to grapple with craftsmanship and experience while they sell. No one in his right mind envies them.

Anyone who understands these inexorable & inescapable barriers to the harried, tense, and nervously exhausting career of a "slick" author, is amused, if he does not shudder, at the ignorant bravado of a certain type of "author". The kind that is completely unteachable because he believes himself "ready" as soon as he takes up writing. The kind that thinks and speaks loudly in terms of agents from the start, and for whom sales are only a matter of luck; brains and skill when the "luck" breaks right, luck when it breaks badly...The tragic thing, though, is that other less sophisticated writers too often haven't stopped to think this matter out. Until they do, the rejections are almost inevitable. It is such a waste of time and energy.

REWRITE

SOME NEWS AND COMMENT

BLUE BOOK, Maxwell Hamilton, 230 Park Ave., NYC 17, came out with a 2-page resume of the new editor's credo and general requirements shortly after he took over. Since it is far too long to summarize adequately, we suggest you write in for a copy, if interested.

Harper Prize Novel Contest. For the first time since this award was established (1922) the "escape" clause has been exercised, and consequently there will be no award for the 1951 contest, although more than 600 ms. in all were received. The judges, two authors, a leading newspaper reviewer, and no editors for the publisher, made the decision, which was unanimous.

This prize is offered every other year. We think that writers should take cognizance of the fact that the escape clause has been used only once in 15 times. We believe that a writer who starts now to tell the best story he is capable of, and tries hard to give it the necessary "distinction" in style and technical excellence, will win the 1953 contest. We hope it will be a member of the WCS Family of writers. That could be. Try it.

The ARCHER, Wilfred & Elinor Henry Brown, Box 3857, Victory Center Sta., North Hollywood, Cal., a new "more or less" literary & Little magazine (See: REWRITE, Oct.), is doing a fine job in keeping us in touch as to the progress it is making. The first issue, the editors report, sold out in a month. The Winter issue is scheduled for early in this month and they have been reading, of course, for the Spring and Summer issues.

Elinor Brown tells us that thanks to mention of this new magazine in REWRITE, a request for statistics, and biographical background of the editors was received from the magazine, GALLEY, which provides an accurate listing of all Little magazines. (It's an easy way to check up on the real value of Little magazines. For some of them are merely vanity affairs, and so a waste of time.)

The Autumn issue of The ARCHER just now at hand, lists a number of prize awards, a few of which are still in the future. A contest for sea poems, and one for fishing poems, is scheduled to close Feb. 15, 1952. Another, subject, "Our American Heritage", closes on May 15, 1952. (Limit in each case, 16 lines. More details later.) Prizes: first prize, a small cash prize; other prizes, merchandise products of the Camas Press, a secondary activity of the editors. (This is a familiar, well nigh inevitable pattern of most Little magazines.)

Poets' Haven News-Journal, Cecile Bonham, 1219 Orange Grove Ave., Glendale 5, Calif., in its Autumn issue lists a series of monthly poetry prize contests through May, 1952. For members and shut-in members. Active out-of-state membership, \$1. Worthy cause.

WHAT BENEFIT TO WRITE FOR "FAME"?

The question has been raised: what "benefit" accrues from being published in the so-called Little (literary and experimental) magazines. That is a good question. It should be stretched to include the newspaper poetry columns and the local newspapers willing to print a writer's features, etc., gratis. For almost anyone can see himself in print, if he's willing to write for nothing or even pays for the privilege. The "vanity" editors in both the magazine and book fields, taking advantage of this situation, attempt to bedevil the issue by talking loudly about "cooperative" and "subsidized" publishing—too often a euphemism for "vanity" publishing because in the great majority of cases these "vanity" publishers exercise no discretion. They are not "editors", merely printers who will publish anything, if they see the money in the palm of your hand ready to be put in the palm of theirs.

The first qualifying answer to this question, then, is what literary or "commercial" value has the magazine or newspaper? It is easy enough for you to examine a few sample copies, or have some worthwhile critic (not a "critic-agent") do it for you. REWRITE is quite famous for doing this honestly and impartially. There are, or have been non-paying columns (F.P.A. ran one) in which it was an honor to appear. The average paste-up newspaper column is a waste of time. But such a column as The OREGONIAN, The Hartford TIMES column and that in The Denver POST's EMPIRE (Sunday) Magazine are good. (Next page, please.)

THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

FTC has issued a complaint against United States Pencil Co. (NYC), charging misrepresentation and the shipping of larger orders than those filed. Also that it uses a front name (National Credit Service Co.) to force collection of these orders.

FTC has ordered R.E.N.Y.E (International Service Bureau & Associates) to stop representing that his business is other than that of locating delinquent debtors.

FTC issued a complaint similar to one reported above to United States Stationery Co. (same co-partners) charging misrepresenting of prices, and shipping unordered merchandise (steel storage and filing cabinets).

FTC has issued a complaint against Wildroot Co., makers of Wildroot hair tonic and shampoo preparations, charging unlawful use of "push money" and discriminatory cooperative advertising allowances. (Note: gratuities to clerks, who push one product rather than another and thereby deprive the customer of the best possible, unbiased choice or selection, are known as "push money".)

Please RENEW your subscription Promtly. It helps us to give you a better magazine.

REWRITE

Similarly, the Little magazines that good editors read in hopes of finding a promising young writer, are excellent "showcases" for the ambitious writer. They also provide interesting opportunities for the selling author to get "off-trail" and so to develop a technique that the commercial magazines are glad to see, even though they refuse to buy the unconventional type of story.

Such magazines as "The American Courier", "Candor" and others like them, which give a relatively beginning writer a chance to see his first trial flights in print, fulfill a very useful purpose. Some of these publications require that the writer subscribe and they pay only in subscriptions, or prizes & frequently these are awarded on the unorthodox basis of readers' votes. Nevertheless, any writer who has reached the stage of being published, knows how much good it does, when one can reread his stuff in cold type.

The great and lasting danger of all these magazines lies in their tendency to sap the writer's will to live and dare. It is somewhat like the baby that resists being pulled out of its mother's womb, or the mother's darling, who'd rather let mother assume the responsibilities of living. In the same way it is very easy for writers when the editor of a new magazine seems unkind, to take the easiest way and go back to the magazine that will print any creditable piece, if the author is willing to stand in line and wait a turn. It takes real courage to overcome the sheer physical horror of ringing doorbells, and waiting for the mss. that come back. You have to persist and apply all your reasoning power to try to break that seeming "wall of indifference" that editors erect. You have to realize that thousands of other writers, too, are facing the same lonely battle. You have to keep trying, keep firing until some little hole appears in the wall.

In the final analysis, every writer needs to develop an overall picture of what he is shooting for and at. Many of us just try to sell one ms. We write aimlessly; we fail to develop programs, or to organize our interest in writing as carefully as we do all of our mss. And time has a tragic way of slipping by until our fingers are old and stiff. If we try to channel our enthusiasms wisely this question will often answer itself. We will know when we have outstayed our time.

It is true, though, that sometimes there's a value in writing for what we think has no value. Every writer can point to examples in his own career when a story that is seemingly a "give-away" and hence a waste of time, leads on to an assignment that is very profitable. The story may attract another editor's eye. The editor for whom you have contributed time and energy and interest, perhaps will reciprocate in some way for you. A tearsheet of the story may prove to be an effective handle. We can't see around a corner, so we must be good workmen and keep our

faith that reward for praiseworthy work well done is a larger opportunity. It may not be shown us immediately, or in the manner that we expect. But it will be offered to us, if we express our faith in life tangibly, positively through continued production. Incidentally, there is one of the paradoxes for which destiny is noteworthy. I have suggested that it is wise to develop overall plans for sustained programs of writing. It's good to develop handles to one's name and become recognized as one who can handle specialized kinds of writing and phases of the human scene.

Yet it is also well to be adaptable. If a new editor asks you to start a novel line of writing, praise God for giving you the power to adjust and seize the opportunity. Many a writer opens the door to Opportunity, then failing to recognize him, slams it shut. To live life fully, one must have integrity but also something of the chameleon in him. As Shakespeare pointed out, "There is a tide in men's affairs, that if taken at the flood," leads on to fame and fortune; and if missed leaves one forever the victim of the dreary and the hum-drug. Part of our job as writers is to have the imaginative drive to seize & use good fortune when it assails us. And so this may well be one answer to the question of what benefit it is to write for the Little magazines. For each there is a separate answer, and only we ourselves can really appraise correctly the sum of the parts. Here at WCG House, we try never to answer such a question directly. Rather, we help each writer to explore all angles of his dilemma. If he does that thoroughly enough, he generally will find the answer in his own heart and mind. And find stimulation and refreshment, too, for having discussed it with an adviser who is his friend and well-wisher as well.

HERE IS A VITAL CORNERSTONE

A Wise Comment. From a review of a movie, "When Worlds Collide", distributed by Joint Estimates of Current Motion Pictures:

"The 'science' in a science-fiction offering has little chance of conviction if the fiction, itself, is difficult to believe."

"Ultimately, 'life' is the only quality that convinces in fiction."

The second comment is taken from a review of John Marquand's new novel. See how neatly it ties in with the first.

On another page we have discussed at some length the Situation, as it applies in a story with regard to the problem of Conflict & Drama as opposed to Reality. This is an aspect of story-telling that many writers fail to think through for themselves. Yet all illusion that the story is life depends on the skill of the writer in doing this very thing. Otherwise the story becomes "just a story".

REWRITE

A SPECIAL WORKSHOP CRITICISM

Here is a letter we received regarding the November Workshop short short story. It is largely self-explanatory, but so helpful we print it separately. Murray Hoyt is a slick writer, who has published in many of the big magazines. He is also author of a very amusing book, now in its second edition, "Does It Always Rain Here, Mr. Hoyt?"

Here, then, is Mr. Hoyt speaking:

"Maybe you just want criticism from writer members of your workshop. But I have some ideas which may be helpful; I pass them on, herewith.

"On me the first paragraph made a 'fuzzy' impact, the second not much better. The next ten paragraphs had a very good—nearly perfect effect on me. The impact was strong; I was interested. (With one exception which I will mention later.)

The last two paragraphs left me extremely disappointed.

You see, in those ten paragraphs I had begun to pick up the real problem of a woman, who did not have the knack of meeting & talking easily with other women. This was a very real problem, and cried out for careful and serious thought resulting in a real, satisfying solution.

Instead we got the coward's way out, which really solved nothing for an MC whom we had been starting definitely to sympathize with. I lost my sympathy instantly. I'll grant you that many of us take the coward's way out.. But we don't like to read about it. We like a heroine who solves her problem, and if she uses a little audacity, so much the better. We don't want her to run away, with the basic problem still unsolved.

Then I began to wonder if Mrs. Page didn't envision the problem differently than I did. Possibly she didn't see the thing on a broad a canvas as I did, and was looking more for a way out than a solution—a way out is always a compromise.

The one exception, which is a detail rather than a criticism of the story, was this: I got mentally derailed in paragraph 4, under the impression that we were talking about the library of the house in which the meeting was held in, and kept looking for the—daughter to appear at Marcia's side. I did not get the deal figured out till the second reading. Two words would fix it so that even a dumb guy like me would get it. The word "public" before "library" and the word "yesterday" after it, to end the sentence.

I'm actually writing this because I got to thinking about it this morning when I ought to have been working on my own story. And I figured that to write it down would be about

the easiest way to clear my mind of it, and get it back where it would net some income.

If this gal can take criticism, it's okay to send this along to her. If not, throw it in the wastebasket. Life is too short to get nasty letters when you're trying to be helpful for free."

Note: we have printed this letter (in its entirety) because we think it shows how a professional looks at an idea objectively. And it is certainly kind of such a writer to be so helpful. Not to mention that it is a compliment for Mrs. Page that her writing held Murray's interest to the exclusion of a story he himself was working on.

It may interest other readers of REWRITE, perhaps, to know that while Mrs. Page is an inexperienced writer, who only recently made her first sale, to a juvenile, her writing, as evidenced by several pieces she has submitted to workshop assignments, has stood up remarkably well. I believe her own comments on the story indicate she can benefit by an analysis such as Murray Hoyt's.

"As I wrote that story," she told us following notification that her ms. was the published one, "I found the 500-word limit helped my writing by forcing me to cut, although I wished I needn't be quite so abrupt. Actually, the story is just a true account of my going to a church women's club meeting, a year ago. I suppose the best fiction is written by adapting experiences, not writing them up verbatim. An ATLANTIC MONTHLY story 'inspired' me to set down my own experience, & call it a story. Until then, I had only occasionally tried a pulp love story, figuring it wisest to start at the bottom. With no luck at all."

We believe Mrs. Page is teachable, & that she has learned one of the first lessons about writing. It does very little good to do any special kind of story, when you are inexperienced, under the false assumption it is easier than another. Naturally, pulps are a bit easier than the more polished slicks, & juveniles, slanted towards less mature, but just as demanding an audience, are less difficult than pulps. But all types of stories are difficult until one has bridged the gulf between raw amateurism and the professional who can call his shots, as they say in tennis, and give any editor a reasonably good, sound facsimile of the kind of story he desires.

Mrs. Page has indicated to me that she is now examining markets with a more critical, observing eye. I do not think that she will immediately blossom forth with an immediate and continuous chain of sales. But I do believe that she is on her way. Anyone who is able to convince Murray Hoyt and Bill & Elva of the reality of a scene and keep all of them interested and "sympathetic" has done a good practice assignment. We wish her luck.